

## CONTRIBUTOR BIO

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CHARLES BELL is the Deputy City Attorney for San Diego and graduated from Cal Poly in 2004 with a degree in Political Science.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

*Charles Bell*

From the moment he wrote his fifth grade book report on Brown v. Board of Education, Charles Bell knew he wanted to become a lawyer. In pursuance of this goal, Charles decided to use his time at Cal Poly not only get a degree in Political Science, but to actively engage in making Cal Poly a better learning environment for everyone. As a football player, Charles noticed that the football team had a difficult time retaining its minority athletes struggling academically. Inspired to help his fellow minority athletes, Charles created the Minority Athletic Mentoring Program (MAMP) for his senior project. Charles also served as ASI's Head of Diversity and helped faculty to update, revise, and reframe curriculum in a way that encouraged diversity in Cal Poly classrooms.

Senior year of college was an incredibly busy one for Charles. In addition to his efforts to universalize Cal Poly's appeal and curriculum, he also served as a file clerk for a local civil litigator, Terry Schubert. Not only was he taking a full load of difficult classes, but Cal Poly's football season was also in full swing and Charles had to prepare for the LSAT. Without the genuine care and concern for him by Political Science professors, Charles was certain he would've been completely overwhelmed by all that was on his plate. With the

support of his professors, Charles made it through his final year at Cal Poly and charged ahead toward law school.

At twenty-two years old, Charles was a confident young man, but that first year of law school, was by far one of the most challenging years of his life. “The thing about the first year of law school—it tears you down and builds you back up. You lose your confidence, but eventually you gain it back.” Despite all of the challenges law school posed, Charles was proud to say that Cal Poly prepared him in ways that students from other universities were not. Charles was used to the smaller class sizes and he was used to the shorter timelines thanks to Cal Poly’s quarter system, which made him more competitive than many of his peers. His competitiveness showed as he secured a job right out of law school with the Public Defender’s office. Unfortunately, the 2008 Financial Crisis was in full swing, and the position fell through. Charles relied upon the strong relationships he built at Cal Poly to explore other career opportunities and was fortunate to land a job in the private sector within the residential mortgage industry practicing civil litigation. Today, Charles proudly works as the Deputy City Attorney for San Diego, where he handles complex cases that deal with employment and government affairs litigation. When asked what the best part about his job was, Charles emphatically responded, “I get to represent a city I love by doing what I love.”

In addition to his career, Charles remains active throughout the San Diego and Cal Poly communities. In San Diego, Charles serves as the president of the Earl B. Gilliam Bar Foundation, which aims to diversify the legal community. He also serves as a mentor to students of the Crawford High School Law Academy by guiding them through the stressful college application and decision process. As for Cal Poly, Charles serves as Founder and President of the Cal Poly Black Alumni Affinity Chapter. Charles’s purpose for creating the alumni chapter is to ensure that the experience of current students and incoming students are just as amazing as his experience was. “To go to Cal Poly and to be able to find a home and a surrogate family was amazing. I want all students to feel that way about Cal Poly.”

As for Political Science students in particular, Charles encourages every student to find a mentor as soon as possible. “A mentor is simply someone you can talk to. You’re going to go into a career that, one way or another, will impact your personal life and mentors allow you to gain the information necessary in order for you to make the best possible decision.” He also encourages

students to utilize the plethora of resources available at Cal Poly—especially Political Science professors. Lastly, Charles would like all Political Science students to know that, “there are so many creative ways to use your political science degree, and it’s good to keep an open mind and interact with a lot of different professionals. Don’t think that you are limited to conventional ways of using your degree. Get creative. You are a smart student who is capable of so much more than you realize.”